



A nonpartisan research and public policy office of the Connecticut General Assembly

Testimony of
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Connecticut Commission on Aging

Appropriations Committee
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Thank you for this opportunity to comment. As you know, the CT Commission on Aging is the nonpartisan state agency devoted to preparing Connecticut for a significantly changed demographic and enhancing the lives of the present and future generations of older adults. For almost twenty years, the Commission has served as an effective leader in statewide efforts to promote choice, independence and dignity for CT's older adults and persons with disabilities. I'd like to thank this committee for its ongoing leadership and collaboration in these efforts.

In these difficult budget times, research-based initiatives, statewide planning efforts, vision and creative thinking are all needed. The CoA stands ready to assist our state in finding solutions to our fiscal problems, while keeping commitments to critical programs and services.

House Bill 5016, Section 74 ~ Consolidation of CHRO with P&A ~ CoA opposes

The Commission on Aging shares the belief that streamlining state government is a worthy goal when it does the following: 1) maximizes state and federal funds, 2) creates greater efficiencies within state government, and 3) is in the best interest of our state's residents. Upon review, the consolidation of the Office of Protection and Advocacy (P&A) with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) does not meet the above criteria. This consolidation would create legal conflicts for both agencies, potentially jeopardize P&A federal funds (a reported \$2.75 million), authority and independence and diminish an important safeguard and voice for people with disabilities.

In addition to persons with disabilities expressing their strong concerns and opposition, state auditors have indicated that this consolidation presents unique conflicts and challenges and the federal government has provided a letter stating its concerns. The federal law prohibits such change in status or "re-designations" except for good cause. Even with good cause for re-designating a P&A system, federal regulations require that a lengthy procedure ensue. If good cause were not established the result would be that with people with disabilities in Connecticut would no longer have access to the authority given by federal P&A laws - to conduct investigations into abuse and neglect, access people in facilities, and to pursue legal and administrative remedies on behalf of people with disabilities.

Thank you for your careful review of this issue. We ask that you oppose any such consolidation at this time to protect the interest of persons with disabilities. Engaging key stakeholders in a thoughtful process, perhaps using Result based Accountability, is a necessary step in any forward motion.

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